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THE WELLAND CANAL

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PRINTED BY LOVE AND HARTY, PLANTHOUSE-YARD,
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THE WELLAND CANAL.

A COMPANY was incorporated in the year 1825, by an Act of the Provincial Parliament of Upper Canada, for the purpose of connecting Lakes Erie and Ontario by a Canal, of sufficient dimensions to admit the passage of vessels of 125 tons burden. The capital, 200,000*l.* Canada currency, or 180,000*l.* sterling, is divided into 16,000 shares, of the value of 11*l.* 5*s.* each; of these shares 13,533 have been subscribed for, and 2,467 shares, amounting to 27,753*l.* 15*s.*, remain undisposed of.

The extreme length of this canal is forty-one miles and a half, of which only about nineteen required entire excavation, the remainder being a natural navigation, caused by rivers and reservoirs. The summit of Lake Erie is 330 feet above Ontario, and the ascent is surmounted by thirty-seven locks. There are two communications with Lake Erie, the one by the Niagara, which will be finished by the 1st of November next—the other by the Grand River, which has been contracted for, and will be finished by the 1st of November, 1829.

The extent of the country connected by this canal, may be seen by reference to a map of North America. From Lake Erie there is an uninterrupted communication to Lakes St. Clair, Huron, and Michigan, and the connexion with Lake Superior, at the Sous St. Marie, may be rendered navigable at a small expense; and although the trade of the country bordering on Lake Erie alone, is a sufficient object for this canal, its profits must eventually be much increased by the navigation of the Lakes beyond, and the settlements upon those lakes greatly advanced by the opening of this communication. A canal from Lake Erie to the Ohio, in the United States, will be finished next season, by which the produce of a great portion of the country bordering on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, will be conveyed to Lake Erie. According to the statement of the collector of the customs at Sandusky, (an American port on Lake Erie), the merchandize landed at that place alone, last season, after passing through the American Erie Canal, amounted to 1,319,823 dollars, from whence it was taken by land, for the supply of the States bordering on the Ohio. What then may be expected when these waters are connected by a navigable communication?

When property is once afloat on Lake Erie, even if destined for the New York market, it will unquestionably pass through the Welland Canal, and enter the American canal at Oswego, on Lake Ontario, in preference to entering it at Buffalo, on Lake Erie; because there will not only be thereby saved 127 miles of canal navigation in boats from Buffalo to Syracuse, but the distance upon Lake Erie will be shortened 48 miles, and from the accumulation of ice in the spring at the entrance of the Niagara River, the navigation by the Welland Canal will be opened a month earlier every year. However, there can be no doubt there will be, in a few years, from an extent of 50,000,000 acres of land, which is situated on Lake Erie, and the waters above it, as much as both those channels can convey. The American Commissioners have already recommended making a lateral canal, adjoining the eastern part of the Erie Canal, from Utica to Albany.

The river St. Laurence, which connects Lake Ontario with the ocean, is navigable for boats, between Prescott and Montreal, a distance of 130 miles; although very difficult and tedious to ascend, from the rapidity of the current.

The Rideau Canal, now in operation, and, intended to connect Lake Ontario with the St. Laurence, at or below Montreal, will avoid the obstructions in that part of the communication, besides being entirely within our own territory.

The St. Laurence will soon be made navigable between Prescott and Montreal, for vessels drawing eight feet water, thereby connecting an extent of waters equal to the whole extent of sea coast on the Atlantic Ocean, bordering on the United States.

When on Lake Ontario, we have 194 feet lockage to the sea, by the St. Laurence, and 574 feet by the Hudson, to New York; our natural advantages are therefore apparent.

Ships of any moderate burden can approach Montreal; and a very great portion of the exports of all those vast and fertile countries, both British and American, rapidly increasing in wealth and numbers, will pass by this channel to the ocean.

Since the construction of the Erie canal, the Americans have diverted almost the whole trade of the western country to the port of New York; the advantages they have gained by this communication will be seen by the following prices now paid for transportation per ton from the United Kingdom to Lake Erie:—

BY THE ST. LAURENCE.

	Miles	£	s.	d.
London to Montreal	3,200	1	2	6
Montreal to Prescott, river navigation	130	4	1	0
Prescott to Niagara Peninsula, lake navigation	270	0	18	0
Portage and boats over Peninsula to Lake Erie	36	1	13	9
		<u>£7</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>

BY THE WAY OF NEW YORK.

	Miles.	£	s.	d.
London to New York	3,200	1	2	6
New York to Albany, river navigation	150	0	11	3
Albany to Buffalo, lake or canal navigation, at the rate of 1½d per mile toll, and 1d. per mile transit	350	3	7	6
		<u>£5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>

The superior facilities of Canada for canals, if we will avail ourselves of them, must soon enable us to regain this trade. When the proposed communications are there opened, the cost of transportation for the same voyage will be as follows:—

BY THE WAY OF NEW YORK.

	£	s.	d.
Present Price	5	2	3
Saving by the Welland Canal	1	3	5
	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>

BY THE ST. LAURENCE.

	£	s.	d.
Present Price	7	15	3
Saving by the Welland Canal	£1	15	6
Saving by the St. Laurence, when navigable	3	1	0
	<u>4</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>6</u>
	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>9</u>

A Calculation of the Freights and Tolls for Exports descending, will make the advantages of the Welland Canal more obvious.

FROM LAKE ERIE TO NEW YORK.

	£	s.	d.
Present Price	3	0	6
Saving by the Welland Canal	0	15	1
	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>

FROM LAKE ERIE TO MONTREAL.

	£	s.	d.
Present Price	3	11	6
Saving by the Welland Canal	£1	13	6
Saving by the St. Laurence, when navigable	0	10	11
	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	<u>£1</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>

Besides the difference of trans-shipments.

The political and commercial advantages which must result to the British Empire on the completion of the canals in Canada are great.

The St. Laurence throughout its present navigable course is British, and consequently open to British ships only;—whatever exports or imports, therefore, are brought down, or sent up through the British canals in that colony, must become freight for the employment of British seamen and tonnage.

The duties imposed by the United States on British merchandize are excessive, and on staple commodities, such as coarse cottons, iron, salt, &c., amount to a prohibition; those duties will be effectually counteracted by the extent of frontier opened by means of these canals—and the consumption of all British manufactures, both in their territory and our own, greatly increased.

The same reasons which shew the great national advantages of the Welland Canal, are sufficient to prove it a profitable investment of capital. This expectation is encouraged by the fact, that the tolls on the American Canal amounted the first year, after its opening in 1825, to 511,280 dollars; in 1826, to 750,000; in 1827, to 859,058; and their Northern Canal, which was made to divert the trade of Lake Champlain from the St. Laurence to the Hudson River, rather than from any expectation of profit, paid the first year after its completion six per cent. upon the money expended.

It may be well to remark, that before the Northern Canal was finished, there were only twenty-two vessels employed on Lake Champlain; three years after its completion there were two hundred and eighteen; this increase must be chiefly attributed to the construction of this canal.

The profits of the Welland Canal are to be derived from the tolls, to be regulated by the Company; with this provision, however, that they are never to divide more than 20 per cent. profit upon the money expended, and that after fifty years, if the profits shall not have been less than $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum, the King may assume the whole canal, upon paying to the Company the money subscribed, and 25 per cent. in addition. The Company possess also, by a royal grant, 13,400 acres of valuable land, and have purchased 1,000 acres more, along the line of the canal. Its hydraulic situations also will be a source of considerable profit in a country where water power is so valuable.

The opinion entertained in America of this undertaking, may be collected from the sums granted by the Colonial Legislatures for the purchase of shares, and still more from the large amount subscribed by foreign capitalists in New York, who could not have been induced so to advance their money from any other motive than a profitable return, and among whom the whole sum required could have been raised, but that it was thought expedient to secure a majority of Shares to British holders.

To shew the opinion of such as are fully competent to decide on such matters—the following letter from two very eminent engineers, who have examined the subject, is here inserted:—

“ London, 13th of May, 1828.

“ Sir,—We have, with much attention and interest, examined the documents you have laid before us, relative to the Welland Canal, now in progress in Upper Canada, and which is intended to connect the Lakes Erie and Ontario by a ship navigation.

“ With respect to the great importance of this undertaking, whether in a political or commercial view, and the advantages to that country, likely to result from its completion, there can be but one opinion among persons who will thoroughly investigate the subject.

“ The great extent of ship navigation in the lakes, above the Falls of Niagara, upon the same level, must always be a source of the products of that country to vessels of considerable burden; for, whenever this is practicable, no other mode of transport can compete with it.

“ These productions are conveyed 120 miles nearer to their market, even if delivered at Oswego, than if intended for the St. Laurence; and as this, when the goods are once embarked, will be with little additional freight or insurance, it must be impossible for a canal, so far as it runs parallel with the river, to be of any service.

“ We are of opinion that you are perfectly justified in reckoning the advantage at the rate of 20s. per ton; and that you must necessarily have a good proportion of that trade which now passes from Lake Erie to New York.

“ But as the improvement of the river St. Laurence, below Lake Ontario, will follow as a natural consequence of this measure (and in this we understand there is no material difficulty), so as to form an uninterrupted line of ship navigation to the ocean; from the superior facilities of that route the produce of the countries on the upper Lakes, will ultimately fall into the natural outlet of the St. Laurence, and the importation of the upper country will return in the same bottoms from the markets of Europe or the West Indies.

“ What the extent of this trade may be in a country so rapidly advancing, cannot be conjectured by us, but there can be little doubt of its amply reimbursing the subscribers for the outlay of their capital.

“ From the plans and sections that have been submitted to us, this canal seems to be very favourably circumstanced, with respect to the ground through which it is cut; the inexhaustible reservoirs which supply it with water, and the very extensive mill power, which will be established at its locks. The prolongation into Lake Erie, besides saving several miles of navigation, will avoid the serious obstruction caused by the drift ice, at the head of the Niagara River, and thus have a material advantage over the New York Canal.

“ THOS. TELFORD.

“ ALEXANDER NIMMO.

“ Wm. Hamilton Merritt, Esq.”

An office will be permanently established in London, for the purpose of transferring shares and paying the dividends. The dividends upon all the shares now subscribed, or to be subscribed in the United Kingdom, will be paid half yearly in London, at par, so that whatever may be the difference of exchange between the two countries, the loss or profit will belong to the Company, and not affect the holders of those shares.

Messrs. Bosanquet and Co., No. 73, Lombard-street, are the Company's Bankers in London, where subscriptions will be received, and the dividends hereafter paid as they arise.

Plans, Profiles, and Reports, shewing the present state of the undertaking, the Act of the Provincial Legislature, and the Powers of the Agent acting for the Company, as well as the Documents necessary to establish the foregoing statements, remain with that firm, to be exhibited to parties willing to become Subscribers, and the Agent, William Hamilton Merritt, Esq. 19, Bury-street, St. James's, will be ready at all times to give such further explanation as may be required.